QUICK AND EASY GUIDE

HOW TO SEO
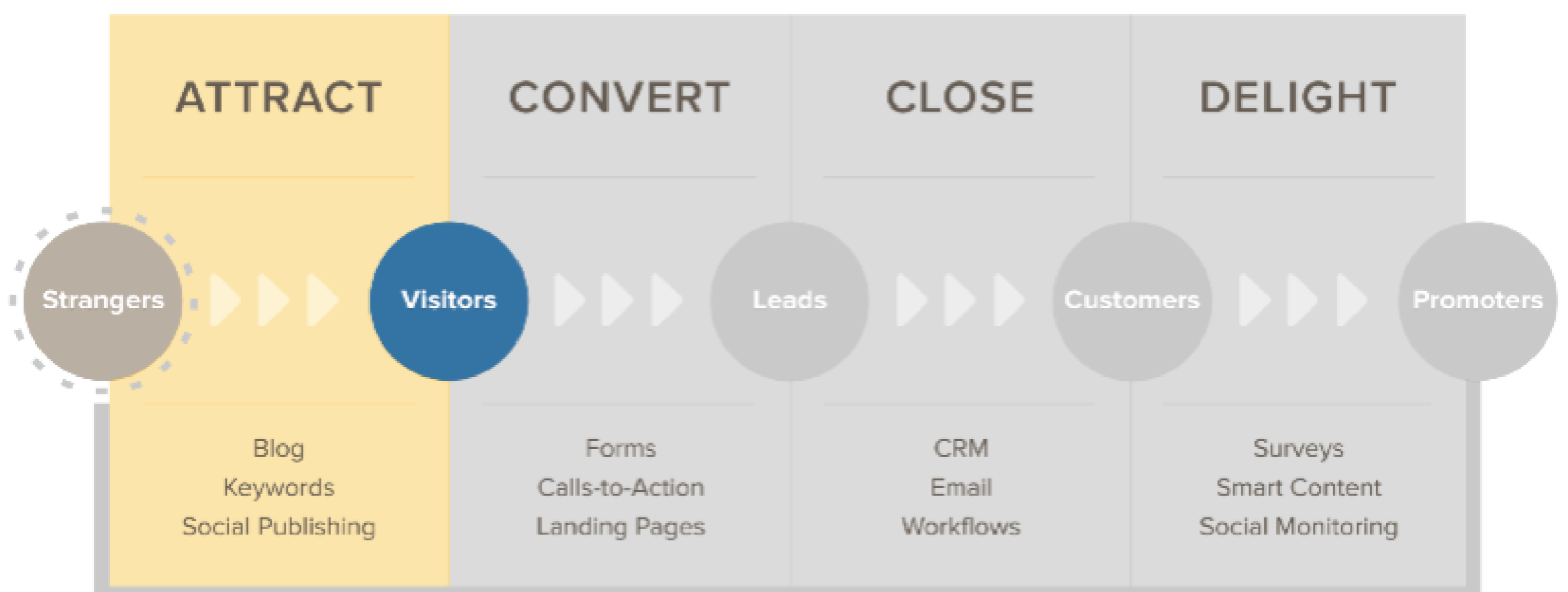
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What is Search Engine Optimization?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of improving a website to attract more online visitors through search engines.

SEO is part of the **Attraction Stage** of the buying process, and helps your business by attract strangers to your website and hopefully turn them into leads or customers.

Inbound Methodology

ATTRACT	CONVERT	CLOSE	DELIGHT
Strangers → Visitors		Leads	Customers → Promoters
Blog	Forms	CRM	Surveys
Keywords	Calls-to-Action	Email	Smart Content
Social Publishing	Landing Pages	Workflows	Social Monitoring

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Google is the most popular search engine in the world. It handles more than **3.3 billion web searches every single day**. These searches usually contain questions or problems that people are trying to resolve like "how to keep my pool from turning green" or "homeowners insurance in scottsdale".

Ranking for certain searches is a competitive game and requires some strategy, effort, and time.

Search engines are charged with presenting the most **relevant** and **trustworthy** answers to online questions. They send what are called **web crawlers** all around the web to try to understand what each website is all about.

A good website is not only crafted with cool, interesting content, but also makes it easy for these crawlers to know what's happening.

Truthfully, **Google doesn't really care so much about you or the success of your website** itself. Their responsibility is with their customers - the ones conducting all these searches. If Google produces a lousy roster of websites for a given search, users won't use Google anymore.

SEO is a competition for attention.

How can my website rank higher in Google searches?

For each web search, Google crunches all of the data gathered by web crawlers and compiles a list of results based on the popularity and authority of each website.

The most helpful and highly regarded sources of information are listed at the top.

To be credible in your professional life, you need a lot of **experience**, a **quality product**, a great **track record**, lots of referrals or **testimonials**, and offer an awesome **customer experience**. It's no different online.

A good reputation has to be earned over time through offering quality resources that people like...**there aren't any shortcuts** - Google is good as spotting fakers.

It's impossible to rank high for everything. You need to choose what searches you want to be found for...**Keyword Research** and **selection** is about picking the fights that are worth winning, and can be won for that matter.

What's the difference between Organic and Paid results?

If you conduct a web search, you'll notice that the top few search results are marked with a small icon **Ad**

These are **paid searches**. Website owners pay money to be shown at the top of the results for the keywords you typed in. This is always an option, but can be expensive depending on your business.

Below these paid results are what are called **organic results**. Here is where you want to be. These are not paid, but **ranked according to relevancy**. Successful SEO means earning a spot in the **top 10 search results** - 1st page.

Statistically, about **94%** of users will click on a search result from the first page of any web search. Less than **6%** will bother to look over the 2nd page and beyond.

This means you have to "pick your battles" carefully. Some searches are much harder to rank for than others.

How to research and select keywords

Keywords are what searchers type into search engines. **They are the subjects or questions that people want to learn about.**

To attract people who are interested in what your site has to offer, you'll need to research what your prospects are searching for online. **What questions need answering?** What do your prospects **care about most?** What terms do they use to describe these queries?

You'll need to start by considering who your customers are. It might be tempting to talk about how great your company is and how awesome your products or services are, but this isn't what your customers care about (just yet).

Put yourself in their shoes and make a list of words or phrases that they might be searching for.

As you make your list, categorize your keywords according to where they **fit in the buying process**. Are they simply becoming **aware** of a problem they are facing? Are they **considering their options** or evaluating different kinds of solutions? Are they making their **final decision** on who to do business with?

The information they are interested in, and thus the information you should present on each web page will vary significantly depending on where your customers stand in the buying process.

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Now, expand your list of keywords by **searching the web for alternatives**. This gives you a great source of **synonyms**, related phrases, or other permutations that people are looking for in your industry. Add all these alternatives to your keyword list...as long as they relate to your business and the interests of your target market.

There are tools to help you analyze what keywords your website users are **already using to find and access your website**. Google Analytics or Hubspot Sources offer great insights on where your web traffic is coming from and what people are doing to find your website. Maybe they're being referred through **social media**, or perhaps they're finding an **article** that you wrote months ago.

You'll need to decide which keywords present the **best opportunity for you to rank for**. Remember that there are probably tons of other websites out there trying to do exactly the same thing...and **only 10 can make it to the first page** of each search result.

Some keywords are going to be much harder to rank for than others. A very general term like "Sports Cars" is pretty broad and a small website would not win many qualified visitors from this keyword strategy.

Alternatively, a **more specific play** on these keywords might **narrow the field** to a more select group, allowing you to compete more favorably. Consider what we call a **long-tail keyword** such as "Red Italian Sports Cars from the 60's". This might focus on the **specific users** you're targeting and give you a better chance of ranking high.

Targeting keywords that are very broad could mean big challenges with achieving high search rank, and ultimately attracting either **unqualified website visitors** or people who just **don't care about your offerings**. It's much better to choose a specific niche for each page and target your audience more acutely.

Note that just because your keyword is long-tail and more specific, this doesn't mean it will be easy to rank for.

Ranking well is a function of how competitive the environment is for your specific search terms.

Tools like Google Analytics, Google Webmaster Tools or Hubspot Keywords allow you to analyze what the level of competition is like for **every possible keyword**.

Perhaps the most common metric is the **Keyword Effectiveness Index (KEI)** which is a ratio of **total monthly searches** versus the level of **existing competition**. Lots of searches with minimal competition is the best scenario.

Quarterly **Search Engine Audit Reports** help to evaluate your website in great detail as compared to the existing top 10 websites in your search result. These comprehensive reports outline **every strength and weakness** of your **On Site SEO** and what specific steps you should be taking to improve your results.

Some further SEO thoughts:

• It takes time for websites to develop credibility in the eyes of search engines...measured in months or even years in many cases.

• More website traffic doesn't always translate into more business. Targeted strategy is best where the visitors you get are interested in your solutions.

• Evaluate the competitive set for each keyword to find niches or opportunities

• Set a process in place to continually develop content around keywords. Consistent, regular updates and attention wins the day.

Consider **Growth Driven Website Design** for new or redesign projects where SEO is a priority. This approach will get you up and running quickly, adding features based on measured results and company goals.

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What is semantic search and why does it matter?

Semantic search is about search engines getting smarter.

Search engines are using semantics, the science of meaning in language, to produce more relevant search results.

It used to be that SEO gurus would suggest ways to "trick" search engines into higher rankings...artificially stuffing keywords, selling mass quantities of fake backlinks, and other **black hat** strategies.

Today, search engines are much more sophisticated in delivering beneficial search results. The major search engines like Google and Bing are taking into account the **intent** or **contextual** meaning of search terms:

• Searcher's location
• Variations of words and synonyms
• The researcher's likely intent
• The context of the search
• Concept matching and natural language queries

Why does this matter?
Well, those who are actually delivering quality content will win the best rankings. Content writers simply have to deliver great stuff that users will truly find useful. There's no getting around it.

In the end, this means a more efficient internet...more accuracy, honesty, and legitimacy all around.

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How do I optimize web pages for search engines?

Now that you've carefully selected your keywords and crafted beautiful, customer-focused content for your web pages, we need to **optimize the page where it will be featured**.

It's important that both your **users** and **search engines quickly understand** what each page is all about. Search engines go through a process to index each page, and you'll want to **make things easy for them**.

First, optimize each page around a **specific keyword**. Be sure the keyword you select accurately reflects what the page is **actually about**.

1. Add the keyword to the page title. The page title shows in a few places like the browser tab and the actual link shown in search results. It should be less than **60 characters**. You can include your company name, but after what is called a "pipe" – a vertical bar in the title of the page.

Example:
"6 Landing Page Conversion Tips | Web Design Phoenix"

2. Add your primary keyword to the URL. If it's a longer url, use dashes to separate each word. Search engines don't like blank spaces so much. If you're changing the web page url, be sure to set up a **301 redirect** to permanently deliver your users to the correct page.

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3. Add keywords to page headers and within the content. Don't artificially or awkwardly throw your keywords into the discussion...**use them naturally**. Google is smart, and it knows when you're "stuffing" keywords and will penalize you for it. Google is also really good at recognizing synonyms and context, so don't be shy about mixing things up a bit.

4. Add keywords to image alt text if there are any images on the page. Google can't understand what images are depicting unless you tell it. This is where alt tags come in, and how images come up in search results. Good alt tags will **complement the subject matter on your page**.

5. Add keywords to the meta description. Meta description is the small body of text that appears in search results beneath the page title. This serves as a **short summary of what the page is going to be about**. While this doesn't affect SEO so much, it does help users quickly understand what the page is about and will **increase clicks**. This text should be no longer than **160 characters**.

6. Include relevant links in the content. Don't go overboard...perhaps a link or two per paragraph is enough. This contributes to the **trustworthiness** of your site and often enhances the user experience.

Internal links refer to relevant pages on your website, whereas **external links** credit sources outside your domain. Both are helpful in terms of user **experience and credibility** with Google. External links, when used appropriately, give Google the impression that you have done your homework, helps you build connections, and gives your readers additional resources.

Writing great content will earn you what we call "inbound links". This is when other sites credit your page and provide their users with a link. Google interprets this as your site being credible and trustworthy...of course depending on the nature of the referring website.

Not all inbound links are created equal - **there are snake oil salesmen out there promising cheap backlinks.**

When possible, all links should have **anchor text** with your keywords. Anchor text is what the link itself says. Rather than "click here", a good link might read "3 Website SEO Pitfalls".

7. Optimize for mobile. Be sure that your layouts are **completely mobile responsive**. This means that information on the site adjusts to **smaller screen sizes**. Menus shift and buttons enlarge to **accommodate finger tapping**. Small fonts and miniature links are not good for mobile users.

Google will penalize you if your site is not mobile responsive.

Modern mobile design principles are also moving toward longer **scrolling pages** rather than menus requiring multiple clicks.

8. Resize and adjust image resolution to speed refresh rates. Google will penalize you if your site takes forever to come up. This makes sense...as a user it's no fun to wait. Resolutions of **72 pixels per inch is standard**. Depending on circumstances, such as an image fading into a background, you may be best served reducing resolutions further.

More on SEO:

• Make sure your site is designed intuitively and easy to browse...don't hide stuff from users or web crawlers.

• Always show users the next step they can take with your business...watch a video, download an ebook, fill out a form, make a call...

• Seek out online directories where your site could be presented – great for legitimate inbound links

• To optimize for local results, set up your web listing in Google Maps and make sure your company location is registered with search engines

"THE ONE WITH THE GREATEST CONTENT WINS"

Commit to continually producing outstanding content over time that your target audience is **looking for**, will **benefit from**, and will **LOVE**.

"Creativity is intelligence having fun"   - Albert Einstein

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